Invention Dimension:
Authentic Research in the Middle School

Farragut Middle School
Hastings on Hudson
New York

Presented by
Joanne McGrath, Sixth Grade Language Arts Teacher
and Hilda McGivney, Assistant Principal

The ID Team: Julie Alcee, Elaine Barella, Lisa Duquette, Erica Finegan,
Catherine Gigantino, Joanne McGrath, Seanna O’Donnell, Martha Polstein,
Barbara Richman Scott Shapiro and Kerry Tighe
We have 492 students in grades 5-8.
Hastings on Hudson is located in Westchester County. We are a northern suburb of New York City on the bank of the Hudson River.
Our staff is diverse: men and women of different ethnicities, races and ages.
Our assessment is the New York State Testing Program
   Grades 5-7: ELA and math
   Grade 8: ELA, math, science, social studies and world language
Twelve percent of our students receive special education services.
Invention Dimension: An interdisciplinary research project for the middle school

- Combines language arts skills and social studies content
- Emphasizes process
- Teaches reading, writing and research skills
- Results in a 3 - 5 page written report and a creative project
- Uses “Big Six Research Steps”
The ID Team

We are:
- Social studies teachers
- Language arts teachers
- Special education teachers
- Library/media teacher

We have:
- Pre-project ID team meetings
- Frequent meetings during the project
- Post-project debriefing meeting
First Dimension: Authentic Research Skills

Students

- Use a variety of sources
  - Print encyclopedias
  - Internet
  - Books
  - Visuals
  - Magazines

- Create a modified bibliography: “source sheets”

- Generate essential research questions

- Learn note-taking skills and strategies in both SS and LA

- Collaborate in topic groups
Second Dimension: Outlining and Writing Process

Students

- Learn formal outlining and how to draft the paper (language arts)
- Make inferences about modern connections (social studies)
- Revise and edit in peer partnerships (language arts and social studies)
Third Dimension: Final Product

Students
- Write a 3 to 5 page research paper
- Produce a creative project
  - Model
  - Oral Presentation (PowerPoint presentation)
  - Multi-media: video, website
  - Performance
  - Interactive lesson taught to class
  - Artistic representation
  - Interpretive presentation
- Share in gallery walk
Assessment

- Teachers evaluate each step with a rubric: notes, outline, and **final product**.
- Special education teachers create a differentiated rubric that is shared with all teachers.
- Students have a chance to make revisions of each step.
Management Strategies

- Communicate among teachers and with families: email and e-board
- Divide the labor: teacher mentors
- Present skills in LA or SS
- Differentiate according to students’ needs
- Provide feedback at multiple assessment points
- Ensure accountability in both classes
- Focus on organization techniques
On-going Challenges

- Time to plan
- Integrating new staff into the team
- Reluctant colleagues
- Student “buzz”
- Differentiation – finding ways for everyone to succeed
- Materials management – finding materials appropriate for 6th graders
What We’ve Learned

This Project

- Makes research authentic: each student becomes an expert
- Has high expectations: everyone does his/her best, including English language learners and learning challenged students.
- Enables consistency among all team teachers
- Utilizes student mentoring
- Prepares students for research in upper grades and non-fiction writing tasks